



APRIL 27, 2016

Proposition 301 Expansion Proposal

Remarks by Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane M. Douglas

Good morning everyone, and thank you for having me here today at the ABEC Summit. For those of you who may not know me, I am Diane Douglas and I have the honor and privilege of serving you as Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction.

There are two key factors that determine the health and success of a state – a favorable business climate and a strong educational system. It is these two factors that caused my husband and me to choose to move to Arizona from New Jersey so long ago.

We were not transferred here through work, but chose to move across the nation to a state with great opportunities for economic prosperity and for our daughter to get the best education available.

I've never regretted that decision.

Now that my daughter is a mom as well and I find myself in the happy role of grandmother, I want my grandson and all Arizona children to have the same opportunity for prosperity and an outstanding education.

Since my time is brief here this morning, I would love to be welcomed back in May to discuss all the great things the Department is working on.

But today I am excited to share that the Arizona Broadband for Education Initiative was unanimously passed last month. The initiative was the result of a competitive national grant written by my staff.

It will provide broadband internet access to underserved and rural schools at little to no cost. With the help of the Corporation Commission, we will likely bring over \$100 million of federal dollars to Arizona with the mission of connecting every student in Arizona to broadband.

On another note, for those of you available later today, I am officially launching the Zip Code Project at a press conference this afternoon in South Phoenix.

The Zip Code Project targets disconnected youth in zip codes that are neediest from a statistical standpoint.

Arizona currently has over 183,000 disconnected youth, which equates to \$127.3 billion in lifetime economic loss. But as impressive as the return on investment from supporting those students may be, we must first consider the human cost of disconnection and ensure that not one life is wasted.

The Zip Code project focuses on building coalitions to fight back against this tide by helping one student at a time reconnect with school attendance and/or employment opportunities.

Our hope is that we can enlist the support of many people in this room to help us continue to build coalitions for this important program.

While these two initiatives promise future success, our state continues to search for ways to retain and attract high quality teachers.

We have lost our way focusing on federal ideas such as standardized tests. The tests we use were never designed to evaluate teachers or schools. In fact, this has handcuffed teachers from providing strong individualized instruction.

It's no wonder we have difficulty attracting teachers to the profession. They work in an environment where they feel restricted, disrespected and underpaid.

Only an overarching vision and decisive action will allow us to solve these issues, the most important of which is that teachers need to be paid more.

In my [2017 AZ Kids Can't Wait! Plan](#), I advocated for teachers to receive a 5% pay raise across the board. I thank the Governor and Legislature for making teacher pay an important part of their budget discussions this session.

Even with these steps forward, only a serious increase in teacher pay can put us on the path to having the best education system in America.

And that is why I specifically came to ABEC to make the following announcement. Many people in this room supported a similar proposal in the past and we are counting on your support and feedback on this proposal in the future.

Today I'm advocating for the permanent extension and expansion of Prop 301 to a full one cent. If Arizonans decide to expand Prop 301 at the ballot, it will generate around \$400 million in additional funding for education each year.

Under my proposal, these funds will address non-supplanted teacher salaries, and could also solve another looming crisis – the depreciation of our school facilities.

By dedicating funding to teacher salaries, we will provide close to an 11% percent raise for teachers. That would give the average teacher nearly \$5,000 extra per year while leaving \$100 million to address our schools' crumbling infrastructure.

In addition, I am also in support of reallocating a greater portion of the current Prop 301 funding to go towards teacher salaries.

All the details of this proposal will be included in my press release and posted on ADE's website.

And as long as we are dependent on sales tax to support our schools, I don't want Prop 301 to have an expiration date.

That's why I am calling for this change, if approved by voters, to be made permanent. We don't need to face any more fiscal cliffs here in Arizona.

If we pay them, they will teach. If we deregulate them, they will teach creatively. This is the way to have a new generation of our children experience an education system that truly puts them first.

On my annual We Are Listening Tours, I heard from parents and teachers throughout the state and they shared what assistance they need. Overwhelmingly Arizonans told me they want their teachers better paid.

While on my tour this spring and fall, I look forward to soliciting their feedback again about this proposal.

Since educating our children is the single most important duty we have as a state, we must support our parents and teachers to help cultivate the future of our state and our country.

Just this week, several Arizona schools were named among the very best in the nation. I won't rest until our entire school system is given that same recognition.

The only way that will happen is if we have a dedicated source of funding for education. I plead with you to settle for no less.

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. May God bless our great state, our nation and especially the vital work you do each and every day.